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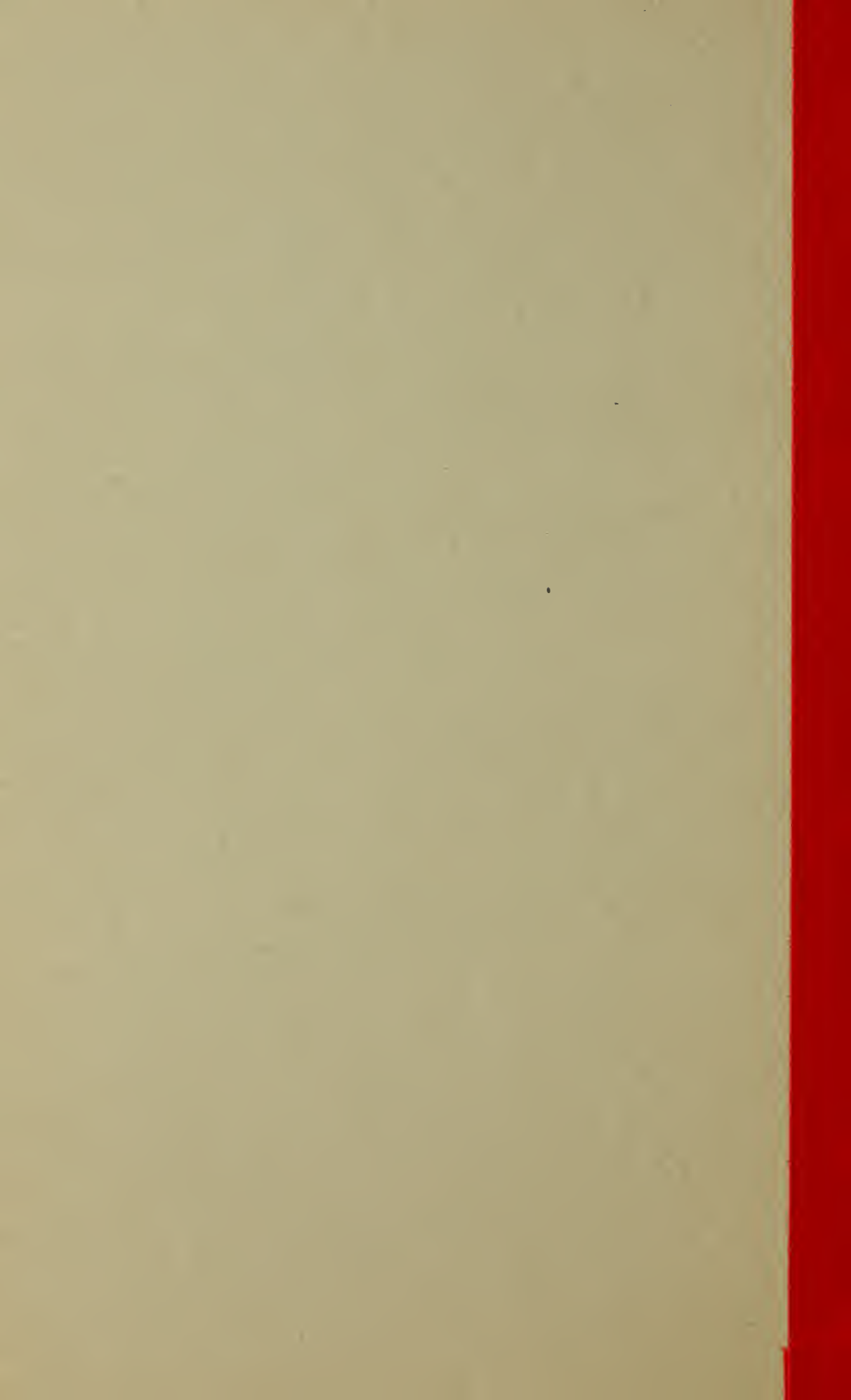
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The University of Oklahoma  
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THE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

Consolidation of Rural Schools

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*Oklahoma University Extension Division*

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC DISCUSSION AND DEBATE

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Norman, Oklahoma  
MARCH 1914

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## FOREWORD

*RESOLVED: That the Consolidation of Rural Schools is desirable.*

Very little has been published on the negative side of this question. The material for the negative has been gleaned from conversation, letters, and bulletins advocating the affirmative but answering objections to consolidation.

This bulletin illustrates the practical value of the series of bulletins in aid of public discussion and debate now being published by the University of Oklahoma. It would be easy to make a bulletin which would encourage public discussion; it might do that and present only one side. But a bulletin designed to assist debaters must make two sides and make them as nearly equal as possible. To do this even inadequately compels the fair presentation of both sides. Whatever may be the convictions of the editors, they must give both sides a chance to win; this is sometimes very difficult, but the general reader is assured that he is getting the strongest possible presentation of the weaker side.

It is this fact that makes such a bulletin valuable to the candid, earnest investigator. If the bulletin is entirely successful it will leave him thinking. Serving the debater also serves the man who wishes to know both sides before making up his mind.

Of course the editors cannot make a side strong which is inherently weak. They can only give such arguments as are used in the actual discussion of the question. They cannot sift the arguments, however absurdly unsound they may be; and quoting arguments does not mean that the editors endorse them.

Thanks are especially due to Principal Ernest F. Ashbaugh, Bartlesville, Okla., for valuable assistance.

The bulletin is sent out with the hope that it may assist in the discussion of this immensely important subject.

## HISTORY

### The District System.

The district system began in Mass. 125 years ago in a law permitting the division of "towns" (townships) into districts small enough to facilitate the collection of children for instruction. It was intended as a temporary make-shift only, and fifty years later, Horace Mann, the greatest of American educational pioneers, declared it to be the "most unfortunate law on the subject of common schools ever enacted in Massachusetts." Such has always been the opinion of educational authorities concerning the district system.

It developed rather slowly in Mass. In 1800 power was given these small districts to levy taxes independently, and in 1827 they were empowered to elect directors and select teachers. It never gave satisfaction and was abolished in 1859 but re-enacted. In 1869 it was abolished again but the next year townships were permitted to reestablish it by a two-thirds vote, and 45 of them did so. In 1882 the system was finally repealed. It died hard in the state where it originated.

After spreading almost all over the country it has been abolished in 23 states, and is evidently on the decline in all the states. The county system has been adopted in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina and Maryland. The township system has been adopted in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Northern Michigan and North Dakota. A mixed system prevails in Iowa, South Carolina, and Utah. New York has a system of modified state control. It will be noted that most of the older states, nearly all of those east of the Mississippi, have abandoned the district system.

One of the chief stays of the district system is the opportunity it affords for gratifying the American hunger for office holding. In Illinois there are about 40,000 school officials to manage about 12,000 teachers. This does not include Chicago with 6,000 teachers and only 21 officials. The same contrast appears everywhere. In Missouri there are 28,000 school officials, but only 12 in St. Louis; in Michigan 25,000 school officials but only 18 in Detroit. When Kentucky abandoned the district system in 1906 she had "8,330 districts and 24,990 school officials, with no unity of purpose and no proper conception of the aim and scope of popular education." Almost all the progress in rural

education in recent years has been in the states which have discarded the district system.

Some form of consolidated school has always been in existence, and in the older states where they have had the most experience they are returning to it. In the northern and eastern states the preference seems to be for the township system, but in the south the county system is preferred. The great weight of educational opinion favors the southern view. The educational achievements of such countries as Germany, France, and the Sweden show very clearly that we cannot expect an efficient and economical administration of educational matters till we place them in the hands of educators who keep up with educational philosophy and progress. To place our railways under the control of the doctors or the hospitals under the control of the railway officials would be no more absurd than placing our educational interests under the control of business men. This has long been recognized in cities where the school board attends to the business end and the superintendent to the educational end of the school system. The problem of rural education will not be solved till the people in the country will learn from the cities, the older states, and the nations of Europe; from the total educational experience of the human race.

#### The Illustrations.

The pictures are from "Among Country Schools" by O. J. Kern, and are used by the kind permission of Ginn & Co., the publishers.



FIG. 113. Going Home from School in Illinois: Temperature  
Twelve Degrees below Zero

Figure 113 represents the old way of going to school at its

best. The children are all healthy and well clad, evidently from well-to-do homes. The very poor, the sickly, the ill clad are at home; the attendance of such at the old fashioned school was very limited. In most districts some of these children would have to walk two or three miles. In the picture the road is covered with snow; sometimes it is covered with slush or bottomless mud.

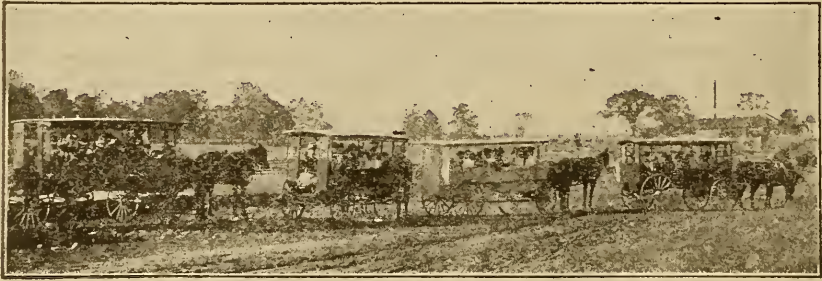


FIG. 114. The New Way in Ohio

Figure 114 represents the new way.. Now all the children go; not only the sickly and ill clad but many who were too old to attend the district school. Those who ride the farthest are on the road for less time than many who walk to a neighborhood school. The hacks are well heated in cold weather and they can be closed against wind and rain. Discipline is easy; if a pupil does not behave he must walk.



FIG. 124. An Old Schoolhouse at Snow Hill, Hancock County, Georgia

Figure 124 is an old fashioned school in Georgia. It was more superior to the barns of that day than present day school houses are to modern barns; so it isn't so bad by comparison. It was a superior school house in its day. It had a porch and was not down on the ground. It was probably used as a church also as the remains of a brush arbor are still visible.

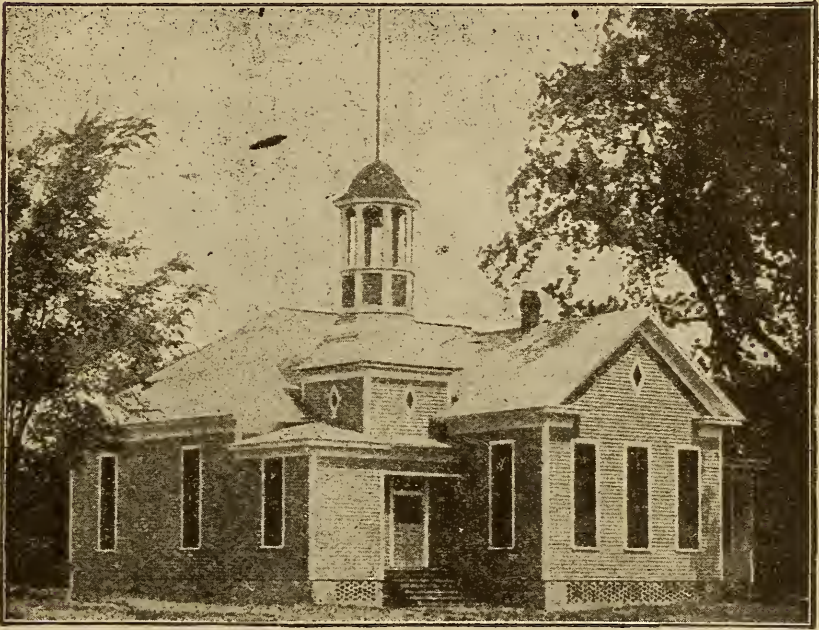


FIG. 127. New Schoolhouse at Snow Hill, Hancock County, Georgia.

After a while this school was consolidated with other neighboring schools thus securing money enough to build a better house. Figure 127 stands on the same site as Fig 124. Both are surrounded by the very same people, and the interval of time between them was very short. What makes the difference? In union there is strength; financial strength and enterprise and enthusiasm.

## AFFIRMATIVE POINTS.

### Digest of Various Articles.

" Even if roads are muddy which can stand it best, the child or the mule?"

The consolidated school district would have better school officers because there would be so many to choose from.

The same conveyance which carry the children to school in the day time may carry their parents to lectures, club meetings, etc., at night.

There is not a single case on the record yet where a consolidated school after being tried, was ever abandoned for the single school.

More than one-third of the rural schools are too small to be efficient. Yet rural schools cost more per capita than town schools.

Suppose a man is satisfied with the single neighborhood school; ought he to force it on his neighbor who wishes better advantages for his children?

In the consolidated district petty neighborhood jealousies and enmities have far less influence and effect; they are lost in the larger numbers.

It is notable that among all the objections urged against consolidated schools there is not one against their increased efficiency: that is universally admitted.

It costs nothing to make the change from the single to the consolidated school. The \$2,500 given by the state to the consolidated school more than offsets any possible loss.

Parents in the country are demanding, and ought to demand educational advantages equal to those of the towns. But there is only one way to get them—absolutely only one—and that is by consolidation.

In former days mature men and women could be secured to teach rural schools; now they are taught almost entirely by young, inexperienced teachers, and they are getting younger all the time.

If children have to start too early in the short, dark days, the school sessions can be shortened as they are almost universally in cities. With a sufficient number of teachers school can stop at 2 p. m. without loss.

Every kind of school has made tremendous advances in the last forty years except the rural school; it has not even held its own, and those who advocate the negative are to blame for it.

But rural schools have improved where they have been consolidated.

Under the consolidated school system children are under the care of responsible persons from the time they leave home in the morning till they return at night; no quarreling, improper language, or improper conduct on the way to and from school.

Objectors to consolidation seem to overlook the fact that rural life is now a failure, that nearly all farmers plan to move to town as soon as they are able, that few boys and fewer girls remain on the farm of their own choice. Consolidation could not possibly do worse than the present system.

The recitation periods are trebled in the consolidated school; music, drawing, agriculture, botany, zoology, domestic science, and many other things can be taught successfully which can scarcely be taught at all in the single, neighborhood school. Chorus singing, debates, libraries and athletics may be provided, and contests and other competitive efforts would enliven life in a way not now possible.

The consolidated school gives opportunity for supervision. Beginning teachers often fail when teaching alone who prove very successful when teaching under skillful and experienced supervision. The principle is true in any business; we would not think of putting inexperienced workers in charge of expensive machinery,—it is only the children who are exposed to such risks.

The consolidated school will equalize educational advantages of country people. All the children will enjoy the same advantages which now only a few in each neighborhood can possess. Now, only the children of the wealthier farmers have the opportunity of getting anything like an education; and the few who do are forever lost to the farm and to rural life and service.

We cannot compare the cost of the consolidated with the single school, for the consolidated school has a more extended course of study,—almost always adds a high school. The same course of study always costs less under consolidation, but the people always wish a better school and they always get it. Of course a consolidated school that gives double the advantages could not cost less than the single schools.

In the consolidated school, children do not sit all day with wet, muddy feet, and damp clothes; they are not compelled to stay at home every day it rains or threatens, or in extremely cold weather. If a child is taken sick a conveyance is right at hand for taking it home. The consolidated school can afford

a rural telephone while the single school cannot, and so the children are in easy reach of their parents all day.

It is admitted that the transportation problem is the greatest difficulty. But every other consideration is so greatly in favor of the consolidated school that even if the transportation problem could not be satisfactorily solved at present it would be entirely overbalanced by the favorable considerations. There are difficulties and drawbacks to our present system, and we get far less results.

Experience proves that with a consolidated school the attendance is a larger proportion of the enumeration; the attendance of the enrolled pupils is much more regular; and tardiness is almost unknown. Pupils can be better classified and graded; instead of often having but one or two in a class the classes are large enough to create interest and enthusiasm; pupils can be classed where they belong instead of being forced into classes by the limits of the teacher's time.

The consolidated school is the only possible way to secure the rural high school, one of the most needed and indispensable educational instrumentalities that can be imagined. This would end the necessity of sending children away from home at the most critical time in life. Under present conditions, children must live away from home almost all their youth, or be deprived of the advantages of higher education. The consolidated school affords even better educational advantages at home than the towns can offer.

Prof. James says that the country boy has an immense advantage of his city cousin because he handles material things at first hand instead of only seeing pictures of them. His perceptions are more vivid and so his power of perception is greater and also all the other powers which depend upon or are closely connected with perception. The country boy almost holds his own in spite of his handicap of poor schools. The consolidated school would make the country rather than the city the best place to educate children.

It is now universally conceded that rural schools should be of a different type from that which prevails in the city. The nearness of the rural school to Nature should be utilized, and it would give a higher type of education better adapted to country life and needs. The fact that under present defective conditions country schools should anything like hold their own shows that if they had a fair chance it would never be necessary for any

farmer to move to town or send his children there for the sake of educational advantages.

It is sometimes argued that the consolidated school will follow the city high school; the fact is consolidation is the only possible way to prevent the rural school from following the type of the town school. This is in fact one of the strongest arguments in favor of the consolidated school; it will enable the rural school to go its own way independently, to offer what its pupils need, and to secure greater efficiency than the town schools have ever been able to achieve. Consolidated schools would soon develop the teachers, methods, administration to meet their peculiar needs; and it is certain that they can never be developed in any other way.

Country boys and girls need a wider social acquaintance and opportunity than is now possible. The consolidated school will prevent "greenness" and by increasing the development of personality immensely increase the possibilities of fame and usefulness. Girls even more than boys need the opportunities of a wider acquaintance than is possible in the small neighborhood. The highest joys of life are social joys, and the highest powers in life are the abilities to influence our fellowmen; and the consolidated school, more than anything else which has been proposed, will minister to these highest needs and opportunities of human life.

The consolidated school means rural life at its best. If the distances to be traveled are great, there is the more at the end of the journey. The distances are there anyhow. Now, these distances defeat all efficient cooperation; without the consolidated school the country will soon be occupied by renters who will have no interest in preserving the soil or improving either the farms or social life, and will flock to the cities as soon as they can get a precarious foothold there. The difficulties and drawbacks of consolidating schools are far less than those of not consolidating.

The greatest difficulty of farmers is securing necessary cooperation. Isolation not only renders it difficult, but farmers do not get accustomed to it. In the neighborhood school there are hardly boys enough to play "cat;" in the consolidated school they can play all the great games, and have contests with other schools in debate, oratory, athletics, and in all these they learn to cooperate, and will continue to do so when they are men. The chief difficulty in securing agricultural credit banks or marketing organizations or political rights is that farmers cannot cooperate.

The consolidated school is worth far more than it will cost for the aid it will give to farmers' cooperation.

The consolidated school will go a long way towards the solution of the problem, "How to keep the boys on the farm." It will bring to life on the farm the culture and refinement of the city, what the farm boy and the ambitious farmer goes to the city to secure, thus severing the ties which bind them to the farm. The consolidated school becomes the social and intellectual center of the community. With its library and reading room its music, its debating clubs and literary societies for young and old, its sports and games and athletic contests, our boys will hesitate to leave such surroundings for the uncertainties of city life. And even if some do strive to enter the larger field of professional life in the city he will do so with far better preparation for it and greater chances of success.

The chief foe of the farmer and of country life is isolation; all recognize this. It prevents cooperation in production and marketing and makes him the prey of those who can combine or cooperate. Very few large enterprises are within reach of the individual farmers, their means are far too limited; so when combination is impossible any considerable achievement is also impossible. The consolidated school is easily the most practicable kind of rural cooperation. If provision is made to bring the children together all the rest can follow. The children will grow up in a larger community and so will have greater social advantages. There will be wider choice in marriage, and in friendships, and so the principle of selection will have far more scope. There would be more resources, more capital, more helpers, more enthusiasm, and so more achievement.

Most country boys cannot attend school in town at all, and of those who do very few can attend the entire school year. A country boy starts to school in the fall and goes till March, then he must stop for farm work. Next fall he starts again and of course can't be promoted, so he goes over the same work again, and again stops schools in the spring. He repeats this for a few years and then gives up all hope of an education. In the consolidated school there are so many boys of that kind that it is easy to provide special classes for them which run through the winter only. At present it is impossible for any boy to get an education unless he can attend school at least 8 months in a year, a thing which thousands of them are unable to do. Some form of consolidated school is the only possible remedy; those who oppose consolidation are robbing such boys of an education.

Why should a neighborhood be limited to 3 or 4 miles square instead of six miles square? The larger the neighborhood the fewer petty jealousies, bickerings, antagonisms, the gossip, and narrow prejudices there are. Both old and young need the larger neighborhood. Social efforts may fail in small communities while completely successful in large ones. The division of Christians into a great many different sects does little harm in cities, but often completely prevents successful Christian work in the country. The only reason why social, religious, and educational advantages are superior in the city is because there are more people to cooperate. In the country neighborhood there are not enough people to do things. Nothing is possible but the most primitive and elementary enterprises. Consolidation is a move in the right direction, and will help solve all the problems of rural life.

Without the consolidated school there is no hope of any improvement in rural conditions. In its wake follow all the goods that result from the cooperation of human beings, the massing of effort, interest, and intelligence. Without the consolidated school the present condition must continue; the children will continue leaving the farm as soon as they can get away from it; the farmers themselves leaving it as soon as they are able to rent their farms and live in town. They will continue to be fleeced by every other occupation and business because they have no opportunity to get together and to cooperate. Where farms are small as they are in Europe, farmers are not so much separated, but here, where farms are large, farmers are necessarily scattered. The consolidated school offers the only practicable method yet suggested of bringing farmers together in a cooperative way.

The opponents of consolidated schools suggest nothing else practicable. The Union Graded School is excellent in theory but it involves keeping up both the neighborhood school and the central school. There will have to be more wealth and more interest in education before that will be possible. Often, too, the younger children need the company of the older for safety and assistance. The plan for a superintendent in charge of three or four rural schools has good points but involves too much expense. No competent superintendent would take such a superintendency with all the traveling in all weather, without more salary than the towns pay; so the towns would get all the best superintendents and the country would not get superintendents capable of making the plan a success. And, then, the expense

for superintendence would be added to the present expense, in many cases nearly or quite doubling it.

Another argument of great practical force in Oklahoma is the fact that state gives aid to communities establishing consolidated schools. This state aid answers the objection of the cost of consolidated schools effectually and gives sufficient aid to communities consolidating their schools to enable them to get thoroly equipped buildings at less expense than they can build cheese boxes for the neighborhood schools. This state aid comes from the national gift to the state as a building fund and so does not increase state taxes. But it does not matter for our present discussion where the aid comes from; it completely answers the objection that consolidation costs too much. It would be easy to sell most of the present school houses for barns,—sometimes for dwellings,—so that no communities in Oklahoma need hesitate to consolidate on account of the expense.

Suppose that after five schools had been consolidated and were in good running order, a proposal were made to disorganize it and return to the old way, what arguments could be urged in favor of doing so? To build and keep up five houses instead of one? To shorten the recitation periods from thirty and forty minutes to ten? To make the children, even the smallest, walk through the mud and slush for an average of two miles or stay at home? To expose the smaller children to the unrestrained bully on the way to and from school? To give up the high school and surrender half the educational advantages? To drive many of the best farmers to the towns to educate their children? And all for what? To get the most inefficient schools in the civilized world; to enable a few mossbacks, whose chief interest in school matters is to keep taxes down, to dominate more effectually a small district.

The fact is, no argument could be made at all.

Consolidated schools are sometimes advocated on the ground of economy. This is a very strong point in their favor. There is an enormous waste in having five teachers teaching five separate reading classes, when one could do it better if the classes were combined. The great advantage of consolidated schools is that they permit the study of more subjects and lengthen the recitation periods, so securing greater efficiency and adaptedness. At present we do not have such a thing as a real rural school; only cheap copies of town schools are possible, or ever will be possible without enlarging the rural school and increasing its constituency sufficiently to afford the efficiency and adapted-

ness to rural life so sadly needed. The economy argument is not that taxes would be made less by consolidation but that the people would get so much more for the taxes paid. Consolidation would furnish the same advantages we now have for a great deal less than they are now costing, but the great argument is that the expenditures would give far more than we are now getting.

The greatly increased social opportunity which must result from the consolidated school will do more than anything else has ever done to check the movement of the country towards the town; for young people of strength and ambition would not leave the independence and wholesomeness of the country to make their living by their wits in the town if the country offered equal social advantages. So the consolidated school is worth all it costs for its indirect value in the enrichment and improvement of social life in the country.

The consolidated school can have its winter lecture courses; entertainments, concerts, debating societies, literary societies, mothers' clubs, farmers' clubs, business organizations for co-operation in marketing and buying, and everything which tends to social improvement and financial advancement. In the whole range of possibilities for rural life there is nothing to compare with the consolidated school; it is worth far more than it costs for its indirect advantages aside from the fact that it offers the only possible opportunity for adequate educational advantages.

The cost of transportation is not nearly as great as is usually expected. The transportation to fourteen schools in La Grange Co. Indiana cost \$441.20 per year for each school. For the whole state of Indiana the cost of transportation averaged only \$32 a month for each wagon. In Trumbull Co. Ohio it was \$31 a month. In Champaign Co. Ill., it was \$33, and in Oklahoma \$35 to \$42. In nearly every case an older student is glad to drive a team and take care of it to help work his way in school. His tuition, board, and a little money for books and clothes offer him a better opportunity than he can get in any town.

The transportation of pupils is usually let to the lowest responsible bidder. Most farmers have teams idle most of the winter when transportation is most difficult; they raise their own feed and can keep a team more cheaply than a livery stable. Hacks with soapstone heaters cost from \$100 to \$200 according to size and style. If the roads are bad farmers suffer no more in transporting children than anything else. In the whole state of Indiana the longest ride is about five miles, and 60 per cent.

ride less than three miles. Where there is a disposition to co-operate the transportation problem is easily solved, and the children enjoy riding infinitely more than the long, lonely walks.

But the ideal country school is absolutely impossible under present conditions and methods. The curriculum of the country schools is now so crowded that sometimes the teacher can get only an average of 10 minutes to a class,—a period absurdly inadequate. To talk of adding any more subjects would be sheer insanity. But the consolidated school permits the uniting of classes, so that we could greatly lengthen recitations and still have abundant time for such new subjects as may be needed. There can be ample time for agriculture, botany, agronomy, horticulture, for farm machinery including labor saving devices for the home, and for all that is needed to make rural education vital, interesting, and practical.

But such an ideal is utterly out of the question with our present system. This is too evident to need discussion. Botany, chemistry, physics cannot be taught without a high school, without laboratories and apparatus,—things which are out of the question in the ordinary single school. These things require buildings, teachers, and equipment which cost far more money than any neighborhood could afford; and even if they could be afforded there would not be enough pupils to utilize them. We can never have the subjects taught in rural schools which need to be and ought to be taught without schools equipped for teaching them; and that means some form of consolidated school.

The rural school today is but little in advance of the rural school of 50 years ago. While the old fashioned wooden mould-board has given way to the modern sulky, the sickle is replaced by the self-binder, the flail and winnowing-sheet have yielded to the separator driven by the traction engine; while the harrow, the cultivator, the silo, and all the improvements in agricultural machinery have revolutionized farming, the rural school persists in its native inefficiency and simplicity. The farmer's stock, his vegetables, his grains have been improved almost beyond belief; the modern barn cannot be compared with the old log stable; the farmer lives in a better house, furnishings to match; everything has progressed more than the school.

Why is this? People are not indifferent to education; the need for it is far greater than it ever was. The chief troubles are that there are not enough of people in the present district to support an efficient school, and if there were, there are not

enough children to make one. The single, neighborhood school has about reached its limits; it is not possible for it to make any considerable progress. The situation is inexorable. There is not money enough to employ more teachers, and if there were, there would not be room enough for them to teach in, and if there were rooms enough there would not be children enough to fill them.

The only remedy then is some kind of consolidation. By saving the waste of duplicating plants, by combining classes it will be easy to secure the necessary funds for buildings, teachers, equipments, longer terms and the larger district will furnish adequate numbers of children.

The only argument against consolidation which has any validity whatever is the transportation problem, and this is equally valid against every other effort at social progress in the country. It is not a problem created by the consolidated school at all. It operates just as effectually against church, Sunday schools, lectures, concerts, entertainments, clubs, and every form of social life in the country. It is equally true that solving this problem for the consolidated school solves it for all other purposes. It is the problem of isolation in country life, and the consolidated school can do more to help solve it than anything else which has yet been suggested.

As roads are improved, bridges built, and vehicles are perfected this difficulty will diminish. With good roads motor buses are now available which would carry the pupils to school in a few minutes. Few individuals could afford them of course, but by combining they become an economy. All the objections urged on this ground are only temporary, and will gradually disappear with progress; and not only that, but they will contribute largely to bring about the progress. When the problem of transportation is solved for the school it is solved for all other purposes at the same time.

The old notion that farmers should furnish roads for the public to use is now thoroughly exploded. The towns are as much interested in good roads as the country is, and county, state, and even nation are taking a hand in securing them. Bad roads are the heaviest tax the farmer pays, and is a burden which oppresses every interest which depends upon the farmer's prosperity. So the nation, state, and county ought to bear the chief expense of building roads; to require the farmer to do it is as unjust as it is futile.

But with the establishment of good roads the chief difficulty

of consolidated schools disappears, and nothing can expedite its disappearance more than efforts to consolidate the schools. And just so far as consolidation of schools is bound up with the better roads problem the argument for it is strengthened instead of weakened. Anything which increases the demand for better roads will help bring them. With good roads a couple of motor buses could pass every house in an average township in less than an hour; and with three or four buses private conveyances would no longer be economical.

### An Example of Consolidation

Let us consider an example. Here are five schools in a township 6 miles square. Each has an enrollment of 10 to 20 pupils. These are distributed as follows:

| School        | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | Total |
|---------------|----|----|----|----|----|-------|
| First Grade   | 2  | 3  | 4  | 3  | 3  | 15    |
| Second Grade  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 3  | 2  | 17    |
| Third Grade   | 2  | 4  | 3  | 2  | 4  | 15    |
| Fourth Grade  | 3  | 4  | 4  | 3  | 2  | 16    |
| Fifth Grade   | 4  | 3  | 2  | 1  | 3  | 13    |
| Sixth Grade   | 2  | 0  | 3  | 2  | 1  | 8     |
| Seventh Grade | 0  | 2  | 1  | 2  | 2  | 7     |
| Eighth Grade  | 2  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 4     |
|               | —  | —  | —  | —  | —  | —     |
|               | 18 | 20 | 22 | 17 | 18 | 95    |

The classes are all small. In all the schools combined there are only 17 pupils in the Second Grade. One teacher could teach them all with much greater interest and results than five teachers with the five separate little classes. To hire five teachers to teach those 17 pupils is a dead waste of four teachers. The same is true of any other grade. With five separate schools each class can receive only about 10 minutes, when combined they can receive whatever time they need. The combined class is not only cheaper but far more efficient, for in the five separate schools no teacher can give more than one-fourth as much time to each recitation as it needs.

With the five separate schools many pupils have to walk two or three miles over muddy roads and without supervision. It is well known that most of the harm that comes to children attending school is in coming and going. In the five separate schools there is no possibility of teaching more than the bare rudiments, and those very ineffectively. With these schools

combined five teachers would not be needed to teach every subject adequately and add several more subjects.

But better school service is not all the gain. With a consolidated school it would be easy to have a winter's lecture course with entertainments and concerts; there could be a circulating library and reading room; there could be clubs of various kinds; it would aid cooperation among farmers by giving opportunities for meetings, because the same conveyances which gather the children to the school could be used by the older people at other times.

But even this would not be the greatest good. The greater numbers in the school would enable the farmers to get the kind of education they need instead of being compelled to follow the models set up by the town schools. The farmers' children could be educated so that they could hold their own against all competition. It would make country life more wholesome and interesting than town life and the boys and girls would stay on the farm because it paid to stay there,—the only thing that will ever stop the drift to the cities.

In fact, the consolidated school will bring to rural communities every blessing and privilege which results from numbers, cooperation, and organization. It would bring together enough people to do things without making the burden unbearable. More things could be done because there would be more people to do them and more resources to do with.

It must be conceded by all that Germany has proved by actual results the superiority of her educational system. Her wonderful strides in manufacturing and commerce and their connection with her schools leave no room for doubt of their practical efficiency. She is teaching more practical knowledge than any other nation; she is giving her youth the knowledge that they will need in their life struggle. Any knowledge has some value, and any knowledge can be made the means of mental development; but the modern world is waking up to the fact that some knowledge is of vastly more value than other knowledge.

We have been believing that a small amount of knowledge, most of it musty and out of touch with actual life, could educate all children alike. We have been acting on the assumption that all varieties of human talents, capacities and faculties could be adequately developed in the same classes, by the same teachers, and with the same subjects. Germany is taking the lead among modern nations in showing the absurdity of all this: and nations

who expect to hold their own in the modern world must heed the lessons she is giving.

But the resources of the country school are utterly insufficient to teach even the limited range of knowledge of our present system. Any attempt to teach children what they really need to know is futile if not preposterous. When one teacher tries to teach seven or eight grades he cannot average ten minutes to a class. In a graded school the same classes would have from 30 to 50 minutes for a recitation. Of course it cannot be done, and in consequence thousands of rural families are being driven to the towns to educate their children.

Then our present system cuts down wages so that the teacher's profession cannot compete with others; and so our rural teachers are either beginners, or unable to do anything else, or, are teaching temporarily till they can do better. While school directors ignore the necessary preparation of teachers and employ them on account of their looks rather than for their education or success in teaching, and while the school teacher must compete with the beginners in all occupations and the failures in all trades and professions there is little hope for improvement.

Teachers cannot afford to meet even the present demands for preparation. When a person can prepare himself for other employments or professions with from one-half to one-tenth of what it would cost to properly prepare for teaching, and then can get a much larger salary with better chance of promotion, why should any one fit himself to be a rural teacher? As a matter of fact they don't. The best rural teachers are either looking towards other occupations or for positions in town or city schools where there are better wages and opportunities.

But it is perfectly evident that small rural schools will never be able to pay teachers sufficient to have them well prepared to teach what is needed in rural schools. In very many communities most of the farms are mortgaged and few farmers are making money. Every few years there is a drought, and sometimes several in succession. Our farms in Oklahoma are all comparatively new and very few are yet equipped with needed buildings and machinery. Under such conditions it is idle to talk about raising money enough by taxation to furnish the education which is needed in the country. We must find a cheaper way, and have more efficient management.

It is perfectly evident that the country can never compete with the town under present conditions. The evident reason is

that in the towns so many people are united in the support of one school that they can get the best that money can procure and yet the burden on the individual be less than it is in the country. The problem of rural education, then, is plainly and simply the problem of getting enough people associated together in the support of one school so that the tax burden will not be too much increased. This is exactly what is accomplished by the consolidated school. It can never cost as much to transport the children to a central school as it does to maintain five or six separate little schools; and the more expensive these separate schools the greater the gain from their consolidation. What the best and wisest people wish for their children should be provided for all.

#### **Saving from Consolidation in La Grange County, Ind.**

Schools abandoned, 38. Teachers in Consolidated schools, 15. Saving in teachers, 23. Saving in salaries, \$10,651.60. Saving in fuel and repairs, \$2,260. Total saving, \$12,911.60. Loss: Number of hacks, 29. Number of children conveyed, 428. Total cost of transportation for year \$6,176.86.

Net gain from consolidation, \$6,734.74 (besides the improvement in the teaching, etc).

Says Prof. Foght, "Of a truth the farm youth have not had a square deal. And the fundamental cause of it all is that our rural population does not spend its school money wisely in the education of their boys and girls. Much of what is invested in rural education is spent to poor advantage in feeble, poorly instructed schools which could just as well be abandoned or consolidated."

#### **Questions Submitted to Patrons of Consolidated Schools in Ohio**

"Does your child stand and wait for the wagon?" Every reply so far is, "No."

"Does your child show increased interest?" Ninety percent say, "Yes;" ten percent say, "No."

"Does your child attend school more regularly?" Eighty percent answer, "Yes." Twenty percent, "See no difference."

"Do your teachers show increased interest?" Ninety-five percent answer, "Yes;" five percent answer either, "No." or "Notice no difference."

"If it takes more time, is it compensated for by better work?" Eighty-five percent answer, "Yes;" fifteen percent, "Can't say," or "No."

"What effect has the consolidated school on the social and educational interests of the township?" Most who have answer-

ed said, "There has been a great improvement." One replied, "In the beginning it stirred up a great deal of trouble, but everything is going along nicely now." A few replied, "No improvement; has not been established long enough to tell what it will do."

## **NEGATIVE POINTS.**

### **Digest of Various Articles.**

Roads are sometimes impassible for days and even weeks, and it is too far to walk to a consolidated school. Children can always get to the neighborhood school.

It is ancient and universally accepted wisdom that, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." On that principle a poor school near home is worth more than a good school at a distance.

In similar way the weaker portions of a proposed consolidated district, the most sparsely settled portions would be, under consolidation, completely outvoted by the more thickly settled portions. To ask such portions to consolidate is like asking them to submit to annihilation.

Consolidation is a costly step; and after it is once taken it is not easy to retrace. It matters not how tired people may become of it or how dissatisfied they must stick to it when once the die is cast. Such facts constitute a practical objection which cannot safely be ignored.

People get attached to the neighborhood school; it has associations and memories cluster around it. It so holds the affections of the people of the vicinity that they hate to give it up. It is vain to call it mere sentiment. It is closely akin to patriotism and love of home, and is too strong to be easily broken.

It is all very well to talk about the consolidated school adding a high school, and teaching a great many subjects not usually taught in neighborhood schools, but we must cut the garment according to the cloth. The people in the country cannot afford such things. They can bond themselves, but bonds have to be paid sometime and interest besides.

The more prominent people in any community very naturally dislike to surrender the control of the education of their children and go into a large district where their voice can have but little influence. They naturally hesitate to surrender the control

of their school to others. This is not only human nature but it is reasonable and justifiable.

Many farmers have paid more for a farm because it was near a school house. If the school is moved he suffers a double wrong; he not only loses what he paid for location, but his property is further depreciated by being a still greater distance from the consolidated school; these differences it is impossible to equalize.

Country people are exceedingly conservative, the consolidated school is a radical proposal. Even if it were theoretically correct a radical policy will not work with conservative people. You have to change the people first. But the affirmative of this question are getting the cart before the horse. It is evident that right now, under the present conditions the negative are right.

Children attending the district school dress very much as they do at home; but in the consolidated school they would have to dress in their Sunday-go-to-meeting best. This must be added to the expense of the consolidation plan. Then the poorer children would suffer in comparison with those whose parents are richer, and there would be many a heartburning which is now unknown.

Riding to school in a wagon from four to six miles for eight years is no small undertaking; it would grow very monotonous in less time than that. The drivers in such cases ought to be as well educated and as good disciplinarians as the teachers. A good driver might be able to manage a mule team satisfactorily, but a wagon load of boys and girls is a different proposition.

Another fact which militates against the consolidated school is the evil influence of bad pupils. With the separate schools that influence is limited to the little neighborhood school where they are well known and their influence is small. But in the consolidation of six schools there would be the aggregation of all the bad and unruly pupils of all, and the evil influence would be greatly multiplied.

The ideal of the consolidated school is the town school. But the town-schools are not altogether successful in the towns, and are not at all adapted to the country. No greater calamity could happen to rural education than to have its schools modeled after town schools. It would inevitably result in wasting the educational resources of the country children, their time and their opportunity, and would not fit them for country life.

Possibly when automobiles are sold at the price of a bus and

team, or when the Single Tax or something else runs street cars on every county road, possibly then we might talk about consolidating our schools. But we are not discussing this subject for 1940 but for 1914. The negative claim that under conditions now existing consolidation will in most cases be inefficient and impractical and is therefore inexpedient and unwise.

Hacks wear out and break down, and they do not always wait till Saturdays to do it. They are sure to do their breaking down while on the road full of children, and some of them four or five miles from home. Parents may well hesitate to assume the risks involved in the scheme of transporting their children so far. These dangers and drawbacks are not fanciful: they are as real as anything can be, and it is impossible to remove them.

Sometimes teams run away,—they certainly have been known to. And in these days when an automobile thinks it has the right of way, teams are often terrified. A run-away with twenty children in the hack is not to be regarded carelessly, or lightly. Sometimes hacks are overturned, sometimes axles or wheels break suddenly, and with only a school boy for driver there are too many lives endangered. The transportation problem is not practicable.

After all that can be said for combining children into large classes, the fact remains that each pupil must learn for himself,—must learn alone. Concert exercises and such may make an interesting exhibition, but each pupil must comprehend for himself. It is the common testimony of educators that country children excel all others in the higher schools, except possibly in mere memorizing. Most of this advantage, if not all, will be lost in the consolidated school.

The difficulties inherent in the transportation system are so great that many parents prefer to take their own children to school in their own conveyances. For this, however, they should in most cases be allowed pay, but where the hack passes a house the district could not afford to pay much if anything, and so there would be constant occasion for disagreement and dispute. Where parents undertake to deliver their own children there is a very strong temptation to keep them at home when the teams are busy with farm work.

The directors of rural schools must awake to the fact that they must compete with town schools for teachers. It is obvious that the towns are continually drawing teachers from the country. It is not only the salary that does it but other things

which could be easily remedied. The tendency in towns is to keep teachers even if they are not perfect. They have learned that the knowledge of the children and of the community which a teacher gets is a real asset which they cannot afford to throw away. A faithful teacher is reasonably sure of continuous employment. This is necessary in any business and is especially necessary in teaching.

Country schools imitate the town schools far too much already, and often the chief motive for consolidation is to imitate them more closely. The country school has easy access to nature,—to the vegetable, animal, and mineral kingdoms. Yet their courses of study are usually modeled after city schools where the riches of plants, flowers, insects, and animals are inaccessible. The consolidated school would be still more like the city school. A far more vital and essential education is possible in the country than in the town, and the advantage should not be surrendered.

It is impossible for the wagon to call at every house. Children who live off the main road must walk to the nearest main road and wait till the hack comes. If it is raining or snowing, or is bitter cold this is out of the question. If on the other hand children are late in getting there the hack must wait. To build little houses or sheds to wait in would not only be expensive but could not protect from cold. Time-pieces necessarily vary in the country, and the condition of roads varies so much that exact meeting is impossible. The scheme will not be practicable in very many cases.

Since there would be more older pupils in the consolidated school there would be far more "love affairs," and they would be far more difficult to manage. The long rides nights and mornings would give such opportunities for "sparking" and "spooning" as are not known now. This is an increasingly difficult problem everywhere; few problems perplex parents and teachers more. It would be hard to invent an institution better adapted to make the problem insoluble than the consolidated school. Children at the age when that disease makes its appearance are away from home almost all the time.

There is no money expended for any purpose which brings anything like such returns as what we pay for schools,—the school tax. It gives our children education which is worth far more to them than fortunes. It marks the difference between a progressive, intelligent community and the backwoods. The tax is insignificant compared with the increased earning capa-

city which results from it. Uneducated children must inevitably take the lowest places when they are grown; they do do it, nothing can prevent it. The negative does not oppose consolidation because it is expensive, but because it is an impractical, chimerical scheme.

In the country the very opposite policy prevails. Many districts refuse to equip a school so that a teacher has a fair chance of accomplishing anything and then blame the teacher for failure. Low pay and uncertain employment will not draw the best talent in any occupation on earth. The most humiliating experiences a human being ever has in this world are in hunting a school. The discourtesies, the haggling over wages, the sneers and criticisms which some directors think are smart would not be endured in any other occupation. Making teachers servile, destroying their self-respect is no way to get good teachers, yet this is a very common practice.

In most neighborhoods the movement for consolidated schools is premature even if it were best. Most school districts still owe part or all of the bonds issued to build their present school houses. To tear down the houses they have and saddle a new debt on the people for a consolidated school house is out of the question. And furthermore, while they are in debt on the old school house they could not afford to build as good a building for the consolidated school as they need to make it effective. The possibility of better buildings is one of the chief arguments for consolidation; where a better building is not possible the argument fails.

An Oklahoma school director said a year or two ago: "I don't keer ennything fer yer dieplomers, an' yer rekkymendations. I kin size up teachers in a half a minit by jis lookin' at 'em." When the people elect such directors what is the use of teachers spending years in expensive preparation? It is notorious that very many school directors judge a teacher far more by their looks than by their attainments or qualifications. So those who are not blest by good looks or cannot put them on are at a hopeless disadvantage. Yet none of the world's greatest teachers have been good looking. If Pestalozzi were alive it is very doubtful if he could get a position in one school out of a hundred in Oklahoma or any other state. Neither could Socrates or Froebel.

The average farmer may not be up on the latest frills in education, but he knows something about transportation in wagons or hacks: and he knows that in very many cases it is

utterly impracticable. In muddy lanes the children would have to get out and walk when the hack sticks in the mud. Some days they could not drive half as fast as other days, so it would be hard to have a regular time schedule. At every house the hack would have to stop for the children to get their wraps on and receive the finishing touches from their mothers. Sometimes the hack would have to go and leave children and then there would be a row, and the driver might lose his job.

We have become accustomed in this country to the American idea of liberty and local self-government. The more important a thing is to us the less we are willing to give up all control of it. Even if others might control it to better results we are still loth to give it up, or to be convinced that it is best to do so. Because a plan works well in Germany where they are accustomed to a centralized government is no assurance that it would work here. The farm communities of Germany are an inheritance from the troubled past when farmers had to live in groups or villages for mutual protection. They are not scattered as our farmers are.

The location of a consolidated school brings up many serious problems. Land near the school will greatly appreciate in value, while land which is remote from the school will be depreciated in value. This will be shown by the rental value of the farms. In other words, the action of the community in locating the school makes a present of great values to those who live near, and robs those remote of equally great values. There is no way under present laws and conditions to prevent this gross injustice. Those who live near the center can afford to bribe voters to secure the location, while those remote can afford to spend money to prevent the loss which the consolidation would occasion.

If we eliminate all schools where consolidation would compel the tax-payers to carry a double burden we should have so few left that there would be but little to discuss. Consolidation is not practicable in by far the greater number of schools. Even where bonds have been paid off the people would want a few years rest before going in debt again. Then we have had several years of poor crops, times are hard, and thousands of people are having a hard time to make ends meet. Everywhere we hear the complaint of high taxes, and it is almost impossible to get enough money to support our present institutions. These arguments may not shine in debate but they have great weight at the ballot box.

The causes of the inefficiency of our rural schools are not to be found in the schools themselves but in the social and economic conditions behind them. It is a mistake to think that consolidated schools will solve our rural problems; they might even aggravate them. Bad roads, uncertain markets, impossibility of efficient cooperation, the isolation of families would be felt far more with consolidated schools than they are now. In other words, consolidation cannot be successful till these and such obstacles are removed; it must be the result of improved rural conditions rather than the cause of them. We cannot climb the last rungs of a ladder till we have successfully climbed the lower ones.

Sweden has what are called "Ambulatory Schools" which have proved greatly successful. In sparsely settled communities instead of trying to carry the children in all weathers the year round to a central school they have several school places situated in different parts of the district. The teacher holds school for a while in one place and then moves to another. In this way the inconvenience is equally divided and all are satisfied. Or they may have a regular school at a fixed location with an ambulatory attachment or a sort of extension department. On the whole Sweden has one of the most successful school systems in the world, though most of the country is very rough and traveling is much more difficult than in Oklahoma.

The chief troubles complained of in rural schools are due to inefficient teachers. Good teachers are rare because school directors do not demand them and are unwilling to pay for them. The consolidated school would not change this; nothing can change it but better supervision and the election of more competent directors. Men are often elected directors now not because they know anything about education but because they don't. They are elected because they will economise, will employ cheap teachers, will have cheap, rickety buildings, and everything pertaining to the school as poverty stricken as possible. If the people elect such men directors in neighborhood schools they would do the same in a consolidated district.

Many people are obsessed by mere bigness. The seeming efficiency of such commercial organizations as the Steel Trust weaken our confidence in small units. But the large school is not always the more efficient school. It is well known that schools are far less efficient when too large than when too small. In a large class emulation is a stimulus to the brighter

pupils; but it is equally a discouragement to the duller ones. In a large class pupils cannot get individual attention, and the timid, backward ones suffer most from this lack. The large school is by no means an unmixed good. If the dull pupils are stimulated by the bright ones, it is also true that the bright ones tend to sink to the level of mediocrity.

Like everything else, teachers will grow and improve under proper conditions. But instead of making this possible we expect perfection at \$40 a month, and keep changing teachers so that growth is impossible. The teacher must put in most of his time and effort in getting acquainted with new conditions every year. The stream cannot rise higher than its source; no school can go in the long run very much beyond its directors. What we need is not consolidation but more supervision, better management and administration. Without these consolidation would do no good; with them consolidation is unnecessary. If we must equip our country schools with inexperienced teachers then there should be a principal or superintendent in charge of three or four schools.

It seems to be assumed by consolidationists that the graded school is the ne plus ultra of educational practice. This is far from the case. The faults of the graded system as found in our town and city schools are many and grievous. The work of each grade is planned for the next grade; the primary school exists as a preparation for the grammar school, the grammar school for the high school, the high school for the college. Even in the kindergarten the college is the goal; yet less than one per cent of the primary grades ever reach the college. We are organizing our elementary education for ends which it never reaches. The colleges dictate to the high schools, the high schools to the grades, and so on down. If this system fails in the towns it would fail all the more in the country.

Much of the agitation for consolidated schools comes from the cities. They can think of nothing better for the country than the transplanting of the city school into the country. But city life in the country is impossible and undesirable, and can only result in making the country people more dissatisfied than ever with rural life. The city man means well but we must take his suggestions with great caution. It is very common for a city man who could not raise a pumpkin which would compare with his own head to criticise the farmer for not keeping his farm like a city park. It is common for men who have never done a day's work on the farm to think they can teach the farm-

er how to manage. We must have better arguments for consolidation than the fact that city theorists favor it.

"The consolidated school will not save expense. Where the people are satisfied with the present course of study, which is far superior to that which prevailed thirty years ago, under consolidation they would want all the new things which they are now content to do without. They will want lectures, and concerts and all sorts of social gatherings; they will want fine school houses, and fine equipments; they will want laboratories, and pianos and apparatus without end. In the long run they will want as many teachers as we have now and more expensive ones. Then they will want trees and shrubbery and flowers. I would not be surprised to see them asking for a telescope, then keeping the wagons till after dark so the children could see the moon through it. Let no one think that consolidation will diminish expenses."

In every community there are likes and dislikes, enmities, feuds, and the larger the community the more there are.

"'Tis true 'tis pity;  
And pity 't is 't is true."

There is a distressing lack of harmony in many neighborhoods, and the larger they are and the more numerous and conflicting the interests the more differences and quarrels and disputes there would be. We have had several cases of this already here in Oklahoma. These are facts which the consolidationists seem to overlook or ignore, but they are vital; they cannot be ignored. There are differences in politics, differences in church connection, differences in race, as well as differences in temperament, tastes and ideals, and all these things prevent harmony and cooperation.

The life out of doors, the fresher air, the wholesomer moral conditions ought to make country children excel the children in the towns. It is a fact that in spite of all the handicaps of rural schools they do almost hold their own with city schools, and with equal chance they would surpass them. Prof. W. S. Smiley of the University of Iowa recently made an extended and searching comparison of the results in country and town schools and sums up the results as follows: "The results indicate that the pupils of the one teacher rural schools know more about the work covered than do the children from the graded schools. The difference is not great, but nevertheless there is

a positive difference in favor of the rural schools.”\* A similar report comes from Dr. S. A. Courtis of the School of Education of the University of Oklahoma, though he has as yet made but little investigation in this line.

The real trouble lies here. To meet the full demand in teaching a country school requires a better education and more teaching ability than is required in town where the teacher works under a superintendent. The rural teacher should know botany well enough to explain the structure and uses of every plant and flower. He should know the habits and relation to man of every bug, every insect, and every animal, and bird. He should know about soils, crops, and their culture. He should have social talent and skill. He cannot specialize in one or two subjects as the town teacher can; he must be able to teach everything taught in the common school, and he must know enough about them to make them interesting and practical to pupils. But who ever heard of a country school offering any inducements to a teacher to make such preparation for teaching. If a teacher made such preparation the average school director would reject him for some one whose “looks” he liked better.

The need in the country is not the abandonment of the country school but its improvement. Many plans have been successful elsewhere which have not been tried here; the consolidated school is not the only alternative to our present system.

A. It is easier to move the teachers than the children. A superintendent can visit three or four schools a day and give an hour or more to each, supplementing the inexperience of the local teacher, teaching some of the more difficult classes, attending to the classification, the discipline, and the general management. No town or city thinks of trying to get along without a superintendent, but he is needed even worse in the country than in the town.

B. The Union Graded System leaves the smaller children in the present neighborhood school till they have completed the fifth grade. Above that grade there are comparatively few pupils; they form most of the classes, but are old enough to ride or drive, and so may attend a central school without the wagon nuisance. It is only the older pupils who can utilize a

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\*It should be noted that the children in the country were about three years older than town children of equal advancement.

central school or profit by it. This plan secures all the advantages of the consolidated school while avoiding its disadvantages.

It must be conceded by all that the rural school situation is extremely unsatisfactory. The drift of population to the towns and cities is one of the most distressing facts of our times. One of its causes, and possibly one of its chief causes is the lack of educational advantages in the country as compared with the towns. Because the negative oppose consolidation does not mean that they are satisfied with present conditions. They simply do not wish to jump out of the frying pan into the fire; that is all. The negative recognize all the existing evils and deplore them as much as the affirmative. But the negative claim that there are too many far more promising remedies for present ills than consolidation which have not yet been tried here, though they have been successful where they have been tried. Among them are: The Union Graded School which establishes a central school for only the higher grades; the Ambulatory School which moves the school instead of the pupils, and which has been so successful in Sweden; the Group System by which several schools are grouped together under one competent superintendent who directs the inexperienced teacher, assists in discipline, and solves the chief school problems; the County System used in most of the Southern states now, which places all the schools under a central county board. Where this is composed of real educators it eliminates the control of the school by incompetent school directors and secures enlightened, competent, progressive management, and in the long run saves a great deal of the expense, or else gives a great deal more for the rate of expense which now prevails.

In one county in Oklahoma an attempt was made to organize a consolidated school for a whole township. There were six schools in the township, and a meeting was called for the purpose of considering the proposition but a majority of the voters did not come. The minority present voted by a small majority to establish a consolidated school for the township. At first there was no organized effort to prevent it, but when a meeting was called to vote bonds for the purpose dissension arose. Some wanted a building patterned after a neighboring high school. Some wished a high school building with auditorium and stage facilities. Some wished to move the old school buildings together for the joint school. Neither party was willing to vote bonds except for its own plan and neither

could command a majority, and the bond issue was voted down. A second meeting was called and the bond proposition was overwhelmingly defeated, and a long and costly litigation resulted. The trial court held that school could not be held in the separate school houses, and since there was no provision for the support of a united school they had none at all in all the six districts, and the expense of the suit was added to the already heavy tax burdens of the township. Life-long friends became bitter enemies, the country church was split into warring factions and services were discontinued. A generation will be required to eliminate the evil effects of this attempt at consolidation.

Often when consolidation succeeds there are left in its train controversies, rivalries, and dissatisfactions which neutralize all the good which could possibly result from it. Consolidation is futile and useless unless a spirit of cooperation has previously been worked up. To ignore such facts as these in urging consolidation is foolish and almost criminal. Where physical and social conditions are unfavorable consolidation is by no means advisable. Where there are diverse and discordant elements in a community it is useless to talk of consolidation. Where roads are bad, where bridges are lacking the transportation of pupils in all weathers is simply impossible.

## **A CHAPTER FROM ACTUAL EXPERIENCE.**

**By a former resident in a consolidated district.**

1. Children were confined in wagons for long periods of time, which was detrimental to health. Those who were picked up first were often taken on as early as 7 a. m. and hauled for two hours; and the same length of time was consumed at night. This required the children to be gotten up earlier in midwinter than was desirable, and kept them on the road four hours a day.

2. Wagons were often unsanitary. The heating was necessarily irregular and resulted in colds. The children from some homes were unclean in clothing and person, and made the air in the closed wagon foul; and sometimes skin diseases and vermin were communicated to other children who were compelled to sit next during the long rides.

3. The drivers were not skillful in managing the children, consequently misbehavior was frequent and dissatisfaction resulted. Further, the moral condition was undesirable; since the children were closely seated in the closed wagon more or less

dark, whispered conversation and suggestive movements were often undetected by the driver.

4. The consolidated school often had too many pupils for each teacher and the individual child received less attention than in the rural school. While individual teaching is being recognized as being more and more essential, even at best the gain in attention given to the individual child was little if any. On the whole there was a distinct loss in individual instruction.

5. In the single rural school the lack of close grading permitted each individual child to advance as fast as he was capable of doing; so that the bright, studious children were not held back, and the dull and backward child received more attention than in the consolidated school.

6. Lack of class incentive was more than compensated for by the increase in teacher incentive gained by closer personal contact of teacher and pupil in the smaller school, which was less mechanical, permitted more freedom, and consequently secured better development of personality.

7. Removal of the small community destroys the community interest and removes the child further from the home. Teacher and parent come into less contact with consequent loss of mutual understanding and cooperation. Those remote from the central school were more isolated than ever; what was gained by those who lived close was lost by those who lived farther away.

8. Children, during this age, should learn something else besides books; that is, they should have a definite part in the work of the home for which they are held personally responsible. The chores not only need the children, but children need the chores and the experience and contact with nature which this work gives. The long time spent on the road prevents this; most of the children leave home too early and get home too late.



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